1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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171 Mundari tribes of the region, for the tribes are thereby bound to one another and set apart from the surrounding Hindu society.

Of course, there are many other distinctive practices which have contributed to external solidarity, two of the more important among them being the language spoken and the deities [177] worshiped. But the Hindus have demonstrated such a genius for incorporating alien cultures and societies that one cannot satisfactorily account for the maintenance of distinctiveness of the Santal and some other closely related tribes of the region on the basis of contrasting likenesses. To begin to understand the preservation of these societies it is necessary to shift to an historical perspective of the social relations between the tribal societies of the region and the increasingly dominant Hindu society.

177 • 563 All about the Santal are examples of formerly Mundari-speaking tribals who have become Hindus. Most conspicuous to the Santal are the Bhumij, numbering over a hundred thousand and living interspersed throughout the territory of the southern Santal. Still bearing Mundari clan names, and some few still speaking a dialect of Mundari, most are nevertheless socially Hindus. According to Sinha, who has done extensive field work among these people, the Bhumij in most regions regard themselves and are regarded by others as Hindus; this is supported by my own observations (Sinha 1956). Like other low castes, they are not often rigorously assigned a particular level in the caste hierarchy, but they do enter into active economic relations with the various Hindu castes of the region. Unlike the Santal, many regard the employment of such Hindu castes as Brahmans, barbers, and washermen as essential, and

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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177 most speak only the regionally prevailing Indian language, i.e.,
• 563 Bengali, Hindi, or Oriya.[1]

One hears of a Bhumij chief of Barabhum who claimed to
177 be a Rājput Kṣatriya and employed degraded Brahmans. In
563 Manbhum thirty years ago there was a Bhumij Kṣatriya who
171 was a large landlord and who protested against his enumeration in the census as a *Bannya Jai* (Hindi = "wild tribe"); he claimed that his rituals conformed with high-caste Hindu standards. He and his retainers who were served by Brahmans and by members of other Hindu castes regarded themselves as superior to the "unclean" artisan and servant castes but inferior to the priestly Brahman and Boishtom castes. Apparently, there is considerable confusion among the "other" Hindu castes as to the rank of this group of Bhumij. Only twenty years ago the women of these Bhumij joined in public mixed dancing and the men still sacrificed chicken at their Sarhul festival. Nevertheless their Pargana was becoming endogamous and their clans had ceased to be exogamous.

Though Hinduization is general among the Bhumij and other tribals in the area, there is a tendency for those tribals who hold traditional offices and/or those who are wealthy to be more acculturated and assimilated than others.

In some regions occupational specialization has occurred, e.g., the Shelo Bhumij of Dhalbhum who are iron smelters and smithies, and the Shelo Kamar of Manbhum, who are blacksmiths and no longer regard themselves as Bhumij.[2] But the Bhumij are not the only tribe so affected, nor is the process of Hinduization confined to this or even simply the last century.

[1] Sinha *ibid.*
[2] Sinha *ibid.*

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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As early as the sixteenth century a Munda tribal in the Ranchi district established himself as a local Rājā.[3] By virtue of his wealth and power he attracted reputable Brahmans to his court who Sanskritized his rituals and manufactured for him a Rājput genealogy. Eventually this status was accepted by other Rājputs and marriage ties were established.

There are numerous other examples, and the Santal themselves have undergone considerable Hindu acculturation and some fission and Hindu assimilation though not nearly to the same degree or in such large numbers as the Bhumij. Hindu-tribal contact in the region has been long and intense. All the tribes in the area have been heavily influenced by Hindu culture, some have been partially and others totally absorbed in the Hindu social order and no doubt many Hindu castes have been so recruited in instances where the historical record is unknown. Why the Bhumij have been assimilated and the Santal, Munda, Ho, and some others have not must be understood by reference to particular historical differences which are beyond the scope of this investigation. However, the examination of Santal historical experience does shed light on the general conditions which are relevant to assimilation as well as on the specific historical events which were crucial to the Santal experience.

Perhaps the single most important event in the history of Santal-Hindu relations was the Santal rebellion of 1855–57. This major public event, which first drew the serious attention of India's English rulers to the Santal, reveals at once the nature of Santal-Hindu relations and the strengths and limitations of Santal solidarity. Commemorated in Santal songs and

[3] Roy 1912.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF ABORIGINE PUPILS*

Year	*Number*
1924–25	4,801
1925–26	3,221
1926–27	5,569
1927–28	5,874
1928–29	6,140
1929–30	6,111
1930–31	6,068
1931–32	6,244
1932–33	6,730
1933–34	6,555
1934–35	6,569
1935–36	6,618
1936–37	6,466
1937–38	6,877
1938–39	8,473

is such a potent cultural divider that social relations are generally unintelligible today without knowledge of the education of the participants. In conversation, the Santal constantly differentiate people according to whether they are "educated-literate" (*paraoc'*; Hindi: *parna* = to read) or "ignorant-illiterate" (*murukh*; Hindi = ignorant). Education and literacy not only confer social prestige; they also produce a qualitatively different kind of Hinduization than the casual acceptance of a

* (Mukherjea) While it is true that there are other "aborigines" in Mayurbhanj, the Santal are the largest of such groups, and there is no reason to think they have contributed a disproportionately small share to these totals. Unfortunately there are no later figures available, nor are there comparable figures for Singhbhum.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF SANTAL RETURNED AS HINDU

(Census of India 1931)*

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Orissa	44	46	43	48
Chota Nagpur Feudatory States (Seraikela, Kharswan)		0	18	48
Singhbhum	16	3	56	23

tion of villages which follow distinctively Hindu religious practices. I have heard of only one Santal village within the territory occupied by the southern Santal which has abandoned traditional forms of worship and become thoroughly Hinduized. In 1916 Roy reported the conversion to Hinduism of a number of Santal in a Hindu village in Orissa; they were served by an outcast Brahman priest.[1] I met only one Santal who had taken up Hindu religious practices, and he lived in the city of Jamshedpur. Nowhere that I went were Santal served by Brahmans, though in some areas Santal families are occasionally visited by members of the Potkar caste, who bring messages from the dead for a fee. The Santal also employ females of various low Hindu castes to deliver their children and sometimes patronize Hindu practitioners of traditional medicine (*Kubraj*; Hindi).

It is true that until recently the Santal in large numbers took part, in their own way, in various Hindu festivals. At many of the major Hindu festivals the Santal would assemble for mixed dancing, and some would become possessed and speak

* More recent census figures do not contain this information because "caste has been abolished" as a legal entity.

[1] Roy, 1916.

2: Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

b. When a child is born out of wedlock.

In case a girl without being married gives birth to a child, her father and brothers inform the village headman and his deputy. These two call the village people together, and when they have gathered they ask the girl who is the father of the child. The village people then seize the man the girl names, and even if he denies responsibility, his word will not be accepted. 848

But if he is able to prove that other youngsters are also implicated, then the child is born in the bidhuṛ-state[3]. If only one person is proved to be responsible, he will have to take the girl and keep her as his wife; but if two or three persons are proved to be implicated, they will have to pay some money; then they shave off the hair of the child's head in the name of the Jog Mañjhi (custos morum of the village), and the child gets his sept. Or if the Jog Mañjhi is a relative, they will shave off the head-hair in the name of the Jog Paranik (the deputy custos morum) or of any man in the village. Of the money that the young men have paid, the child's mother will get some, to nurse the child until it gets strong; the man in whose name they shave off the head-hair gets some, and the village people get the rest of the money. If the child's mother is unable to name anyone as father, then also the child becomes a bidhuṛ, if the male relatives of the girl are unable to buy a man to stand as a husband for her. But if they are able to buy her a husband, the child will get this one's sept, and they shave off the head-hair of the child in his name. To buy a husband the male relatives of the girl will have to pay twenty rupees. This money the man who stands as husband gets. If they are unable to procure a husband, they will shave off the head-hair for the child as a bidhuṛ in the name of the village Jog Mañjhi or his deputy, or of any man in the village, and the child will get this man's sept. At this time the male relatives of the child's mother will have to pay, and the man in whose name they shave off the child's head-hair will get the money. Formerly, before money was introduced, one pair of bullocks, one cow with calf (in milk) and one bundle of paddy had to be paid. This the man who stands as husband gets. [583]

If a Santal man has had illicit intercourse with a girl of another race, or a Santal girl with a man of another race, and a child is born, in this case we outcaste such ones for life, and such people will run away from among us. [563]

c. Caco chaṭiar, the ceremony when a Santal is given full social rights.

There is no fixed time for the caco chaṭiar[4], only that it must be performed before marriage, and children cannot be married unless they have gone through this ceremony. When a man has a number of children, he will have this act performed with 881

[3] The Santal word, bidhuṛ, is used about one who has no recognized father. [4] Caco is the Santal word for toddling, a child's first successful attempt to walk. As the name implies, the caco chaṭiar may be performed with a child, as soon as it is able to move about. [192]

[4] Cala Sin. Hin. – Toddling

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

m. Hirem bâihâ (a solatium to the first wife for getting a co-wife).

595 When a married pair do not get children, or a man, only due to licentiousness, or for any reason, gets a co-wife, he cannot, without making his first wife agree to it, bring the co-wife into his house. If the first wife is not willing, she can, standing in the door, meet the co-wife, beating her. There is a customary rule about this. The first wife gets as a solatium for getting a co-wife five rupees or a calf. When she gets this, all three will sit down beside each other in front of the village council, facing the rising of the sun. Husband and wife make the co-wife sit between them on the right side of the man. The man then applies sindur to his first wife, and what is left of the sindur he applies to a dimbu flower[67], and with his left hand he sticks this into the hair of the co-wife's head. The first wife manages the house and household.

n. Elopement.

684 When a man and a woman run away to another country to live together, we call this an elopement. A woman who has a husband, or a related woman or girl, whom it is not permissible to marry, such ones they elope with, fearing the husband, or fearing to be outcasted.

If a man runs away with a married woman, they would formerly track them, until they found them, and then cut them down, and none would follow this matter up. Nowadays they make them pay double brideprice and give the woman into charge, and the headman of the village of the eloping man gets five rupees, because he saves his head. And if related persons elope, they outcaste such people. If they do not separate, they will remain outcasted for their whole life, and no one will eat or drink with them, and children of these will not find way down to water (i. e., to be married). If they separate they will "eat them into caste"; but there will be very heavy expenses. If relatives who are prohibited from marrying elope, the parents on both sides will also have to arrange and pay to be "eaten into caste again", they themselves alone; thereby they will be taken into society again. But if they permit the two who eloped to come to their homes, the whole family will be outcasted; and the village people will also be punished, otherwise people will not give them their daughters in marriage either, and will not marry theirs.

To strive after the possession of a married woman and to elope with another man's wife is somehow customary. If they elope with a person of another race, they remain outcasted for life, these two alone, and the parents get more punishment. [563]

[67] Oxystelma Esculentum, var. thyrsiflorum, L.

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4, 6 (ca. 1933-1939) 1932
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175 this we do not know anything and no light is avail-
668 able to assert that *Kharwar* was ever a clan name.
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It should, however, be noted here that the Mayur-
174 bhanj Census Report, 1931, (Vol. I, p. 215) opines
101 that "the present Santals are the descendants of the
668 section of the tribe who became followers of Bhagi-
rath (the leader of the Kharwar movement)—a Santal
who endeavoured to start a movement to turn out
the Sahibs and Zemindars out of the country and
who was tried for sedition in 1871 and imprisoned
at Bhagalpur where he died."

Gòndwars

114 The Santals of Mayurbhanj when questioned
614 invariably answered that they were twelve clans, but
they made no mention of the *Bedea* (supposed to be
lost) and made up for the deficiency by mentioning
Gòndwars. This was remarkable as in no other
account do we come across such a name. In course
of searching enquiries also we could not meet any
Gòndwar. [The Mayurbhanj Census Report (1931,
Vol. I, p. 192) also mentions the clan.]

614 The general belief among the Santals is that
563 *Gòndwars* occupy a low position among them as they
829 are supposed to be a cross between *Gònd-Muṇḍà*
and *Santals*. There is in existence in Mayurbhanj
a class of "Hansdak's" called "Gòndwar-Hansdak's"
and they are considered distinctly low in the esti-

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,6 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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mation of the Santals, as distinct from other sub-clans as "Kuda-Hansdak," "Bale Hansdak" who are considered pure. It is said that the *Gòndwars*, in their attempt to conceal their real identity declare themselves as belonging to the *Sòrèn* clan, whereas, in their manner of worship they differ from the Sòrèns radically, thereby giving a clue to their identity.

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The derivation of the very word *Gòndwar* points to their connexion with the Gònds. The ending "war" probably means "relating to." In saying so, we rely on the fact that one of the sub-clans of the *Murmus* call themselves *Khedwar-Murmu*. According to them they derived the name from the circumstance that their progenitors chased and hunted a "Murum" (*Nil gae* ; *Portax Pictu*). *Khedwar* here means those related to a chase (*khed* = chase, *war* = relating to).[1]

Clan Exogamy and Totemism

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At this stage we should note that all these clans are exogamous ; and presumably to preserve the blood from being contaminated by unconscious incest, they have certain pass-words to distinguish

1. Regarding Bedeas, Kharwars and Gòndwars, we must acknowledge the help received from Moulavi M. Laeequddin, Census Officer, Mayurbhanj.

[115]

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

829 571 tied. Even men who enjoy a wide reputation in their own tribe become ineffectual when engaging in a discussion with *Deko*, a factor which nullifies many of the advantages that they might otherwise gain by their representation on local self-governing bodies. The difficulty is not simply one of language, for those who reach such positions are men of some education who have a command of Bengali; it is caused by the old fear of the chicken for the bird of prey. Santals themselves complain that their own representatives are not "cunning" enough.

648 829 With certain of the lower castes who are cultivators like themselves the Santals claim a special relationship. Chief among these are the Kurmi or Mahato, who are looked upon as distant kinsfolk. "Formerly", said an informant, "they used to look on us as their younger brothers. At their weddings we used to carry away their baskets of sweets, and in fact without our presence their weddings could not take place. They sacrifice pigs at the time of the *Sohrae*. Our ancestors used to tell the story of how during the rule of the Moslems the Kurmi were oppressed. [539] They had great trouble to survive. It is said that one day when we Santals were celebrating a *Mak' Mŏṛẽ* festival, a band of Moslems was driving a group of Mahato before them. They came right into the place where we were sacrificing, but even so they did not lose caste. In this way they are co-sharers with the Santals." Here, however, is some Santal lore that is not altogether to the credit of the Mahato: "All the Mahato women have to learn witchcraft. If any of them does not do so, she cannot get married. For this reason when a Mahato party is seeking a bride the first question which they ask is, 'Has she learnt witchcraft or not?' "

563 [829] There are other stories of related peoples, e.g. the Deswali, who are said to have resulted from the union of a local *raja* with a Santal girl, and there are a number of castes with whom they live in close contact. The most interesting of these is the Kamar caste, workers in iron. The Santals would appear to have been using iron implements both in agriculture and in hunting for a very long period, but they do not work in iron themselves. Until comparatively recently, iron smelting from ore gathered on the hillsides was common and the smelting was done by the Kamars. Modern industry has brought this to an end, but the sites of old furnaces can still be identified by the heaps of iron slag, which the Santals call "iron excrement". The Kamars, however, are still blacksmiths. Every moderate-sized village contains a family of Kamars who have been granted a piece of land from the

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

village and who also receive payment in cash and in kind for their work. They are thoroughly familiar with Santali, but their mother tongue is the village Bengali of the area. They observe their own caste rules and do not intermarry with the Santals, with whom they live on excellent terms. They have no part in the Santal village cult, and they make no contributions when collections are made throughout the village for festivals. Their own cult is locally characterized by *Dharma* worship; in one village a post is planted in the ground at the end of the month of *Pus*. On the first day of *Magh* (mid-January) the village Kamar stands on top of this post with a white cock in his hands, and after bowing to the four corners of the compass in turn he releases the cock, saying: "Take, Dharma, we give it to you." There is then a scramble among the Santal spectators to catch it, and the man who does so is rewarded by the gift of a sheep. This ceremony goes on alongside the Santal festival which is taking place at the same time.

Occasionally there are in Santal villages isolated houses belonging to people of other castes. In one village one finds a Muci family, leather workers whose chief occupation is to make and mend drums; in another a Tanti family, who are weavers. The Santals do not have a great regard for the Bauri, the most numerous of the cultivating castes in the area apart from themselves. Their chief complaint about the Bauri is that the latter will eat food left over by anyone, a practice which fills the Santals with horror. On the other hand, there are frequently close friendships between individual Santals and men of other castes. The practice of sealing a friendship by a symbolic exchange of gifts is prevalent, and there are instances where Santals have entered into such friendships with Bauris and, indeed, with folk of other races who are of the same sex. The usual method of cementing such friendships is known as the "flower friendship", which takes the form of an exchange of garlands, followed by mutual salutations and sharing beer or food together. Friendships sealed in this way result in an intimate relationship, a real sharing of burdens as well as of joys.

While some forms of exploitation have been checked, there are still many who appear to thrive on the ignorance of the Santal. I witnessed a scene in the village street of Kuchliaghati when a *Deko* trader was having dealings with the women of the village. He had come to collect from them quantities of resin from the *babla* tree, a species of acacia, and he was paying them by exchanging equal weights of salt for the resin. The